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Immediate Release

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Environment Department to Hold Town Hall Meetings Across the State to Discuss Convenience Store Safety

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today announced plans to hold seven town hall meetings in the next two weeks to discuss convenience store safety and the Department's plans to protect these businesses' employees and customers from violent crime.

"Our plan to better regulate these stores will help save lives and reduce crime while providing stronger protections for convenience store workers and the general public," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry.

The meetings have been scheduled as follows:

Monday, October 20	Santa Fe	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Marquez Building 525 Camino de los Marquez
Tuesday, October 21	Las Cruces	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Department of Health 1170 N. Solano
Wednesday, October 22	Roswell	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	NM Dept of Game and Fish Bama Plaza/ 1912 W. 2 nd
Thursday, October 23	Farmington	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Civic Center 200 W. Arrington
Monday, October 27	Hobbs	5:00 PM – 6:30 PM	Hobbs City Hall 300 N. Turner
Tuesday, October 28	Albuquerque	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM	Rotunda (UNM) Near Barnhart and University
Wednesday, October 29	Taos	5:00PM – 6:30 PM	Town Hall/ Rio Grande Hall/ Section D 121 Civic Plaza Drive

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In recent years, a series of high profile convenience store acts of violence, including the well-publicized murders of clerks in Tucumcari and Hobbs, have highlighted the need for better regulatory protection of late night retail employees. Recognizing this need, Senator Richard Martinez sponsored and the Legislature passed Senate Joint Memorial 4 last spring. It directed NMED's Occupational Health and Safety Bureau (OHSB) to investigate the problem and suggest solutions. The Department is currently drafting regulations as a result of that study.

If enacted, requirements in these draft regulations will include:

- Increased lighting in parking and store areas
- Windows clear of signage
- Camera/security link to police stations or silent alarm
- Time lock safes
- Employee training on safety and security issues
- Closing between the hours of 11 pm and 5 am or putting an additional person on duty if a violent act has recently occurred or safety guidelines cannot be met.

These recommendations are part of the bureau's recently completed study of violent or potentially violent acts against convenience store employees between the hours of 11 pm and 5 am. To compile data on violent acts, OHSB contacted police departments in Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, Farmington, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Santa Fe and Taos as well as the State Police and the New Mexico Department of Labor. The study focused on the period of January 1998 through April 2003.

Examining data for both clerks inside stores as well as acts perpetrated against anyone else on the property, the OHSB study found 16 reported homicides, 24 rapes, 37 kidnappings, 392 batteries, 1,451 assaults, 467 aggravated assaults, 7 drive-by shootings, 2,633 robberies, 70 suicides and 23,432 reports of theft, among thousands of other reports.

OHSB plans to have draft regulations to Secretary Curry by November 1. These will then be reviewed by the state Environmental Improvement Board at a public hearing.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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